

AN AWFUL DISASTER.

Burning of the "Granite" Woollen Mill at Fall River.

Four Hundred Girls and Men Shut In by Flames.

GREAT SACRIFICE OF LIFE.

Forty Operatives Crushed and Burned to Death.

Eighty Seriously and Fatally Injured.

SCENES OF DEATH.

Despairing Girls Flung Themselves from the Upper Windows.

All Escape Cut Off—Bodies Charred Beyond Recognition.

FALL RIVER, Sept. 19, 1874.

One of those fearful calamities which shocks and saddens a community beyond the power of expression has visited the industrial city of Fall River to-day. Besides a fire of colossal proportions, involving a heavy loss of valuable property, there is added the terrible record of twenty or more human lives among the sacrificed. Many have been maimed and injured beyond recovery, others hopelessly crippled for life. The story of the fire and its consequences is a brief and simple one, but the event has cast a mantle of gloom and sorrow over the community which no brief time will obliterate. It was about seven o'clock this morning when the fire alarm bells indicated that there was a conflagration in the manufacturing section of the city, and, of course, there was more than ordinary excitement among the citizens. It was soon learned that the large Granite Mill, No. 1, was in flames, and the wild and painful rumors followed that nearly all of the four hundred operatives employed there were being literally roasted alive. Everywhere there was the wildest terror and excitement, and it seemed as if the whole community was paralyzed with grief and insanity.

It was not at first known that the mill was in flames, but it was soon ascertained that the fire had broken out in the manufacturing section of the city, and, of course, there was more than ordinary excitement among the citizens. It was soon learned that the large Granite Mill, No. 1, was in flames, and the wild and painful rumors followed that nearly all of the four hundred operatives employed there were being literally roasted alive. Everywhere there was the wildest terror and excitement, and it seemed as if the whole community was paralyzed with grief and insanity.

The excitement was terrible—men, women and children running through the streets in a half-crazed manner, many being not more than half clad. Not until after the flames had gained great headway was the alarm sounded. At that time the flames were pouring out of the lower windows. The attic or spool room contained from fifty to seventy-five young girls, and the first thing they knew of the progress of the approaching fire was a dense, suffocating volume of smoke. Of course this produced a panic, and the girls were almost paralyzed with fright. As the flames were leaping up the staircase there was now no possible means of escape, and the crowd of shrieking, half-crazed girls fled to the northern section of the building, huddled together, and realizing that the flames must soon reach them began praying, others calling for help. One or two heroic men by means of a rope lowered several of them safely on to the ground, preferring death in such a manner rather than by burning. Most of those who threw themselves from the windows were the sixth story operatives, and, of course, were nearly all instantly killed or so badly injured as to live but a short time. The bodies of some were literally dashed to pieces on the ground, and were only recognizable by their clothing.

Only one person out of all who leaped from the windows escaped without being killed or terribly bruised. This was a lad about sixteen years old; and, incredible as it may seem, he jumped from the upper story and landed on his feet and was only somewhat jarred by his terrible leap. Besides those who were killed by jumping from the windows some were burned to death, but exactly how many is not yet known, as it is impossible to examine the interior of the ruins at this writing. There were, indeed, numerous scenes of the most harrowing description. Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters were running hither and thither in wild despair, seeking to learn the fate of their kindred, and the ground around was covered with the dead and wounded. Nearly all were children of tender years, and the piteous moans of the maimed that allied the air were truly agonizing.

Miss Smith, a girl who was among the saved, says that her first knowledge of impending danger was from some girls at the other end of the room running toward her shrieking and crying, many of them so terror-stricken that their limbs became almost useless. Some of them, she says, were praying, others wailing, and many were so paralyzed with fear, stood in mute agony and seemingly almost unconscious of their danger. The hero of the calamity is a young fellow named Bosworth, who lowered one woman on the end of a rope and then took another in his arms and descended safely with her down the same rope to the ground. A moment later and the flames had burned the upper end of the rope so that it was no longer available. One man, being completely cut off, made his exit to the roof by means of the scuttle, and, with a rope, lowered himself over the roof to the ground in safety. When he reached terra firma he stated that a companion who was just behind had fallen neck suffocated.

JULIA COFFEY'S STORY.
A young girl named Julia Coffey states that she was first alarmed by the cry of "Fire!" and at the time heavy columns of smoke burst through the spool room door. The overseer was surrounded by a crowd of little children, and as soon as the alarm was given he rushed for the staircase, but was forced back by the incoming flames. He then rushed for the elevator, still surrounded by the

shrieking, terrified operatives. A crowd of the children were placed on the elevator, but when he attempted to send it down it would not work. A number of the children were taken off, but even then it failed to respond to the belt. A rush was then made for the window, and a number of men in the room began uncoiling a long rope to let the terrified crowd to the ground. Quite a number had been passed down in safety, when the rope, about twenty-five feet from the ground, was burned in two. The overseer had in the meantime descended the line and reached the ground with but a few injuries. By this time the smoke had become so dense that all who remained were compelled to crowd to the windows for air, many of them plunging head foremost to the ground, and their brains were scattered around for several yards. The impression of the young girl Coffey seems to be that if an attempt had been made to descend the staircase it would have been successful; but when the help saw the overseer fall to attempt the feat they gave up all hope, and sought safety at the windows at either end of the building. It being in the attic, low windows were on the side. This girl also states that she sat for several minutes on the window sill of the south end, and by her side was an elderly man, who, when he disappeared in the smoke, she then grasped the rope and slid down several feet, after which she lost all consciousness and fell to the ground.

WHEN WERE THEY MET?

A man named Harrington states that he saw the fire and rushed into the mill. Passing up the first flight of stairs he tried the door of the room, but found it locked. He then hastened to the ground. At this time the upper story was in a blaze and the help were jumping from the windows.

Johanna Healey corroborates the story and narrates with thrilling effect the terror of the women. She sprang from the window, and her sister, who did the same thing, had her brains dashed out. Isabella Morehead, who escaped with a few bruises, gives the same account, adding that the overseer reached the ground long before many of the women. Thomas H. O'Brien, of Providence, saw the breaking out of the flames and the help jumping from the window and a crowd of men attempting to save cloth. On his story they turned their labors to the saving of life. Before his eyes six women, one boy and four men dropped to the ground and were instantly killed.

THE AGONY OF DESPAIR.

About one hour after the fire had enveloped the entire story below the attic and had worked its way, preceded by immense volumes of smoke, to the spool room, a young girl was seen to present herself at a window of the fifth story, in the south end, and, throwing up her arms in a piteous, agonizing way, her lips moving apparently in prayer, fell back in the burning room and disappeared. In other windows the same heartrending scenes were enacted, and the people far beneath, unable to aid the poor, suffering creatures, looked on in horror. The men and boys were the first to commence jumping from the windows in the fourth and fifth stories, but soon after the girls employed in the different rooms began to leap to the ground. Every window was crowded with excited persons, all eager to jump out, but upon stepping on the window sill they would hesitate a moment about the distance, and then with a wild shout spring as far as possible out into the air only to fall to the ground, crushed. Many who had sustained only slight injuries by their fall would be rendered almost helpless by some one jumping upon them.

THE CRIES OF LITTLE GIRLS.

In some of the rooms for assistance were awful. One girl, apparently about nine years of age, was observed to crawl to an unoccupied window in the third story, lay her little hands on the window sill, and then with a weak cry fell back exhausted. Another girl declared to descend on a rope, but she was noticed three or four others attempted to lower themselves at the same time, the rope was broken and the young women fell to the ground. The operatives continued jumping from the burning building, and but few, if any, were rescued by the firemen, as some difficulty was experienced in getting the ladders above the second story. One woman was observed running about among the killed and wounded, exclaiming in piteous tones, "Oh, where's my Nora?" She had found one of her sisters, who had been almost instantly killed by jumping from the building, and as her account had not been told the other, who is supposed to have shared a like fate. A boy, evidently twelve years old, jumped from the building and was caught on a mattress, being uninjured. He immediately ran into the street and started off in the direction of the City Hall as fast as possible. All the medical aid at hand was summoned and commenced rendering medical treatment to the wounded. Teams were obtained and the wounded parties conveyed to the tenement houses near by, where they were promptly cared for by surgeons and nurses. Happily the loss of life is not so extensive as at first reported.

BODIES RECOVERED.

Up to this evening only sixteen bodies have been recovered and recognized, and these are as follows:—

Honora Coffey.
Helen J. Hunter.
James Turner.
Anna J. Smith.
Mary Healey.
Margaret Murphy.
Bridget Murphy.
Katie Murphy.
Gertrude Gray.
Katie Connel.
Victoria Warner.
James Smith.
Thomas Cavanaugh.
Frederick Porter.
Mary A. Healey.
The three Murphy girls were sisters and were all children in the family. There are still quite a number missing, and their bodies are probably in the ruins. The charred remains of seven little girls were taken out this evening, but they cannot be recognized.

PERSONS DANGEROUSLY INJURED.

The following are those who are most dangerously injured, and many of them will not recover:—

Mary Harty.
Johanna Healey.
Anna F. Healey.
Anna Daley.
Margaret Sullivan.
Mary Sullivan.
Anna Tooley.
Margaret Tooley.
Katie Healey.
Deia Warner.
Hannah O'Brien.
John Harrington.
John Mahoney.
Isabella Morehead.
Mary Bonner.
Nancy Mullins.
Abella Keith.
Edna T. Keith.
John Coffey.
Nellie Jones.
Hannah Stafford.
James Mason.
Thomas Gibson.

THE LOSS AND INSURANCE.

The mill destroyed was one of two owned by the Granite Corporation, and was one of the largest as well as one of the finest woollen factories in Fall River. It had 36,688 spindles, 850 looms, and gave employment to about 450 hands. The card and finishing rooms are not altogether ruined, but there is nothing left of the spinning and weaving rooms, and the whole loss will be upward of a quarter of a million dollars, on which there is an insurance of \$450,000, divided as follows:—

Manufacturers' of Boston.....\$80,000
Arkwright, of Boston.....50,000
Millwrights, of Boston.....20,000
City of Providence.....10,000
Fireman's, of Providence.....50,000
Rhode Island, of Providence.....40,000
Manufacturers' of Providence.....50,000
Manufacturers' of Worcester.....40,000
Fall River Mutual.....50,000
Other policies.....67,000
Total.....\$450,000.

DISCUSSING THE RESPONSIBILITY.
The question of the responsibility of this horrible calamity is everywhere discussed this evening.

The fire caught from some heated machinery. It does not appear that there were any appliances for such an emergency beyond a few pails of water. If there was any apparatus it certainly was not used. There were numerous fire escapes on the sides of the buildings, but none on the ends, where, in this instance, they would have been useful, and probably assisted in the escape of everybody. The signal of danger was sounded all through the mill as early as possible; but a panic ensued, the flames swept on and escape was impossible for many. Even the elevator refused to rise at the critical moment, or many might have been rescued by that source. Another drawback was the imperfect working of the fire alarm telegraph; for at first the wrong number of strokes were sounded, and the firemen were confused as to the proper location of the fire, and when they did arrive on the spot the saving of the building was an impossibility. 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